

77 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are used to replace nouns in a sentence. They can refer to people or things and have different forms depending on whether they are a subject or an object.

See also:

Verb patterns with objects **53**

Possession **80** Contractions **R13**

77.1 SUBJECT PRONOUNS

Subject pronouns replace the subject of a sentence. They are used to avoid repetition, or where a name is not known. There are no formal or informal forms of pronouns in English.



Who's **he**?

The subject pronoun "he" is used because the speaker doesn't know the person's name.

The verbs "be" and "have" are often contracted with pronouns.

That's Andy. **He's** a policeman.

"He" refers to Andy to avoid repetition.



HOW TO FORM

The pronoun used depends on how many nouns it is replacing, and person (first, second, or third.)

	FIRST PERSON	SECOND PERSON	THIRD PERSON
SINGULAR	I	you	he she it
PLURAL	we	you	they

FURTHER EXAMPLES

I'm turning 25 next week.



You are a great actor.



He likes driving fast.



Stuart and **I** are going climbing.



They complain every time.



You make a great team.



77.2 OBJECT PRONOUNS

Object pronouns replace the object of a sentence. Most of them have a different form from the equivalent subject pronoun.


Animals love Lizzy.

↓

Animals love **her**.

"Lizzy" is the object.

"Her" replaces "Lizzy."



There is no difference between direct and indirect object pronouns.


I gave **her** the puppy.

↓

The puppy loves **her**.

"Her" is the indirect object.

"Her" is the direct object.



TIP

"You" is the same whether it is singular, plural, a subject, or an object.

HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT						
I	we	you	he	she	it	they
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
me	us	you	him	her	it	them
OBJECT						

FURTHER EXAMPLES

I want to tell **you** that I'm sorry.



"All" can be used to show that "you" is plural.

Sam invited **you** all to the party.



Dave asked **me** to go with **him**.



We're sad that **he** won't come with **us**.



It was a very difficult time for **them**.



Georgia wanted **it** for Christmas.



78 Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns show that the subject of a verb is the same as its object. They can also be used in other situations to add emphasis.

See also:

Verbs patterns with objects 53

Personal pronouns 77

78.1 REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

Reflexive pronouns in English are formed by adding the suffix “-self” or “-selves” to simple pronouns.

The subject pronoun refers to the person doing the action.

A reflexive pronoun is used when the same person is affected by the action.



He cut **himself** while chopping vegetables.

HOW TO FORM

OBJECT PRONOUNS	REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS
me	myself
you	yourself
This is the plural form of “yourself.”	
you	yourselves
her	herself
him	himself
it	itself
us	ourselves
them	themselves

FURTHER EXAMPLES

I left **myself** a reminder about the meeting.



You must prepare **yourselves** for this exam.



Sarah sees **herself** as a natural team leader.



He introduced **himself** to the other guests.



The door locks **itself** when you close it.



We pride **ourselves** on our customer service.



They're teaching **themselves** to cook.



78.2 VERBS THAT CANNOT BE REFLEXIVE

Several verbs that are followed by reflexive pronouns in other languages are not normally followed by a reflexive pronoun in English.

The verb "relax" is not followed by a reflexive pronoun.

I'm really stressed. I can't **relax**. ✓



I'm really stressed. I can't relax **myself**. ✗

This is wrong.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



I'll turn my music down if you can't **concentrate**.



He **shaves** every morning.



He was sick, but he's **feeling** better now.



She **goes to bed** at the same time every night.



Let's **meet** at the café at 2:30.



She **washes her hair** every evening.



I **get up** early every day.



I often **hurry** out of the house.

COMMON MISTAKES REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

A reflexive pronoun can only be used if the subject and object of the sentence are the same. If the object is different from the subject, an object pronoun should be used instead.

The subject of the sentence is "my boss," so it is correct to use an object pronoun.

My boss invited Joe and **me** to the meeting. ✓

My boss invited **myself** and Joe to the meeting. ✗

"I" is not the subject of the sentence, so it is wrong to use a reflexive pronoun.

78.3 USING REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS FOR EMPHASIS

Sometimes reflexive pronouns are not essential to the grammar of the sentence, but can be used to add emphasis in different ways.



The company director gave the talk.

This sentence makes sense without a reflexive pronoun.

Adding the reflexive pronoun at the end of the clause emphasizes that the action was not done by someone else.

The company director gave the talk **himself**.

[The company director gave the talk, rather than getting someone else to do it.]

Adding the reflexive pronoun directly after the subject emphasizes its importance.

The company director **himself** gave the talk.

[The company director, who is an important person, gave the talk.]

FURTHER EXAMPLES



You don't have to do the dishes. I'll do them **myself**.



She's fixing her car **herself**. It's cheaper than taking it to the garage.



The meal **itself** wasn't very good, but it was a great evening.



The board members **themselves** will be at the meeting today.



I do my laundry **myself**, but my dad does my sister's for her.



I wanted us to build the furniture **ourselves**, but it's not going well.

78.4 REFLEXIVE COLLOCATIONS

Many collocations contain reflexive pronouns. They often follow the pattern verb plus reflexive pronoun plus preposition.



She still has to **familiarize herself with** company policy.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



Are you leaving early today? **Enjoy yourself!**



The managers don't **concern themselves with** minor issues.



Remember to **behave yourselves** when you are in public.



Try to **tear yourself away from** the computer as often as possible.



He was **sitting by himself** in the café.

"By" is used with a reflexive pronoun to mean "alone."

Reflexive pronouns are often used in the imperative. Here, "yourself" implies that "you" is the subject.

TIP

Sometimes the subject is not included, but is implied by the reflexive pronoun.

78.5 "EACH OTHER"

When two or more people or things perform the same action to the other, "each other" is used instead of a reflexive pronoun.

Amy and Raj looked at **each other**.

[Amy looked at Raj and Raj looked at Amy.]



Amy and Raj looked at **themselves** in the mirror.

[Amy looked herself in the mirror and Raj looked at himself in the mirror.]



FURTHER EXAMPLES

They gave **each other** presents.

My cats hate **each other!**

"One another" means the same as "each other."

The children are shouting at **one another**.

We're helping **each other** with our homework.

79 Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns, such as “anyone,” “someone,” and “everyone,” are used to refer to a person or object, or a group of people or objects, without explaining who or what they are.

See also:

Present simple 1

Forming questions 34

79.1 “ANYONE” AND “SOMEONE”

“Someone” and “somebody” refer to an unspecified person in a positive statement or question.

“Anyone” and “anybody” refer to an unspecified person in a question or negative statement.



Did **anyone** call me this morning?

Yes, **someone** called you at 11 o'clock.



Do you want to talk to **somebody**?

“Somebody” means the same as “someone,” but is more informal.

No, I don't want to talk to **anybody**.

“Anybody” means the same as “anyone,” but is more informal.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Is **someone** working late?



Can **somebody** carry my bag?



I gave **somebody** a flower.



Someone gave me a present.



I didn't give **anybody** your name.



Did **anyone** buy a gift for Mrs. Tan?



I don't know **anyone** in this town.



Did **anybody** here send me this letter?



79.2 "EVERYONE" AND "NO ONE"

"Everyone" refers to a whole group of people.

"No one" means no person in a group.

"No one" is written as two words.

Why is there **no one** in the office?



Everyone is at the big meeting.

The singular form of the verb is used with "everyone" and "everybody."



"Everybody" means the same as "everyone," but is less formal.



Where is **everybody**?

I don't know, there's **nobody** here.

The singular form of the verb is used with "nobody" and "no one."

"Nobody" means the same as "no one."



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Nobody wants to come with me.



I'm at the park with **everyone** if you'd like to join us.



Everybody has some kind of special skill.



There was **nobody** but me at work until 10am.



! COMMON MISTAKES "NO ONE" AND "ANYONE"

"No one" and "nobody" go in positive statements and questions.

"Anyone" and "anybody" go in negative statements and questions.

This is a negative statement, so "anyone" or "anybody" is used.

There **isn't anyone** here. ✓

There **isn't no one** here. ✗

This is a negative statement, so "no one" is incorrect.

79.3 "SOMETHING" AND "ANYTHING"

"Something" and "anything" refer to an unspecified or unnamed object or thing. "Something" can only be used in questions and positive statements, whereas "anything" can be used in negative statements as well as questions and positive statements.

Can I have **something** to eat?

Here "something" refers to a specific, unnamed thing that the speaker has in mind.

Yes, have **something** from the cupboard.

Here "something" has a more general meaning, as the speaker may not have a specific thing in mind.



Is there **anything** I can help with?

The singular form of the verb is used with "anything" and "something."

No, there isn't **anything** you can do.

This statement is negative, so "anything" is used, not "something."



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Have **anything** you want.

"Anything" used in positive statements shows the possibilities are unlimited.



Anything baked by my grandmother tastes delicious.



There's **something** I need to tell you.



We don't have **anything** in common.



Something that I've always enjoyed is kayaking with my friends.



I know I've forgotten **something**, but I can't think what it is.



I'd do **anything** to be able to sing like her.



Something spooky happened last night.



79.4 "NOTHING" AND "EVERYTHING"

"Nothing" means that there are no available objects or things.

Tim and James have **nothing** in common.

There is no single thing that Tim and James have in common.



"Everything" means all the possible objects or things are available.

Tim and Dan do **everything** together.



Where "nothing" is used in a positive statement, "anything" can be used in a negative statement with the same meaning.

There's **nothing** I want to buy here.

[There isn't anything I want to buy here.]

The verb is positive.

The verb is negative.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

There's **nothing** I love more than a sunny day.



Everything is going well at the moment.



Nothing at the exhibition was any good.



I love that new Italian restaurant. **Everything** tastes so good!



I want to see **everything** at the museum.



I know absolutely **nothing** about Geography.



I do **everything** to the best of my ability.



Nothing interests me about politics.



80 Possession

Possessive determiners, possessive pronouns, apostrophe with "s," and the verbs "have" and "have got" are all used to express possession in English.

See also:

Forming questions **34** Verb patterns with objects **53** "This / that / these / those" **65**

80.1 POSSESSIVE DETERMINERS

Possessive determiners are used before a noun to show who it belongs to. They change form depending on whether the owner is singular, plural, male, or female.



Felix is **my** cat.

I own the cat.



Coco is **your** rabbit.

The rabbit belongs to you.



Buster is **her** dog.

The dog belongs to a woman.



Polly is **his** parrot.

The parrot belongs to a man.



Rachel is **our** daughter.

We are her parents.



John is **their** son.

They are his parents.

HOW TO FORM

I



my



my cat



you



your



your rabbit



he



his



his wife



she



her



her sister



it



its



its ball



we



our



our horse



they



their



their son



80.2 POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

Possessive pronouns can also be used to explain who owns something. Unlike possessive determiners, they replace the noun they are showing possession of.

The determiner comes before the noun.

This is **my** car.



These are **her** books.



This car is **mine**.



These books are **hers**.



The noun comes before the verb.

The possessive pronoun is used after the verb. It replaces "my car."

HOW TO FORM

DETERMINERS

my

your

his

her

its

our

their

PRONOUNS

mine

yours

his

hers

its

ours

theirs

FURTHER EXAMPLES

This is **their** suitcase.



That suitcase is **theirs**.



We're staying in **our** new villa.



The villa is **ours**.



The boy is playing with **his** toys.



All these toys are **his**.



I'll bring some food to **your** picnic.



The rest of the food is **yours**.



80.3 APOSTROPHE WITH "S"

An apostrophe and the letter "s" are added to the end of a singular noun to show that what comes after the noun belongs to it.

This form is correct in English, but it is not normally used.

the mother of Lizzie

Lizzie's mother

This is a common way of talking about belonging.

An apostrophe with an "s" shows ownership.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

The "s" after the apostrophe is optional when the noun already ends in an "-s."

Tess' dog



Tia's rabbit



Dave's grandmother



If something belongs to more than one noun, "-s" is only added to the last one.

Juan and Beth's parrot



The baby's toy



The dog's ball



COMMON MISTAKES APOSTROPHES

Apostrophes are often incorrectly added before the "s" when talking about years or decades.

I was born in the 1960s. ✓

The best decade was the 70s. ✓



I was born in the 1960's. ✗

The best decade was the 70's. ✗

This is neither possessive nor a contraction, so there is no need for an apostrophe.

80.4 APOSTROPHES AND PLURAL NOUNS

To show belonging with a plural noun that ends in “-s,” just an apostrophe with no “s” is added.

Ginger is my **parents’** cat.

Plural nouns that end with “-s” use an apostrophe with no extra “s.”



To show belonging with a plural noun that doesn't end in “-s,” an apostrophe and an “s” are added.

Polly is our **children’s** parrot.

This is formed in the same way as singular nouns, with an apostrophe and “s.”



FURTHER EXAMPLES

My **friends’** dog is called Rex.



I’m looking after my **cousins’** rabbit.



That is his **grandparents’** house.



She cares about her **students’** grades.



These are the **men’s** rooms.



It depends on the **people’s** vote.



It is important not to confuse “its” with “it’s.” “Its” is a third person singular possessive determiner, and never has an apostrophe. “It’s” is only ever a contraction of “it is.”



The dog is playing with **its** ball. ✓

It’s a shiny, red ball. ✓

This is a possessive so needs no apostrophe.

The dog is playing with **it’s** ball. ✗

Its a shiny, red ball. ✗

This is a contraction of “it is,” so should have an apostrophe before the “s.”

80.5 "HAVE"

The verb "have" can be used to talk about what people own.

I have a large garage.



"Has" is used for the third person singular (he, she, or it).

She has a yard.



HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT	"HAVE"	OBJECT
I You We They	have	a large garage.
He She It	has	

These subject pronouns take "have."

These subject pronouns take "has."

80.6 "HAVE" NEGATIVES

Although "have" is irregular, its negative is formed in the usual way. The negative form can also be contracted as with other verbs.



I have a bathtub.

I { do not
don't } have a bathtub.

"Do not" can be shortened to "don't."

"Does not" is used instead of "do not" for she, he, and it.

Jim has a bathtub.

Jim { does not
doesn't } have a bathtub.

"Does not" can be shortened to "doesn't."

"Have" is always used instead of "has" in the negative.

80.7 "HAVE" AND "HAVE GOT"

"Have got" is another way to say "has" when talking about possession. "Have" is appropriate in all situations, but "have got" is only used in spoken UK English.

I have a new phone.

"I've" cannot be used in this context.



I've got a new phone.

"I have" can become "I've" when used with "got."

"Got" doesn't change when the subject changes.

I don't have a dishwasher.



I haven't got a dishwasher.

"Have not" can become "haven't" when used with "got."

Do you have your keys?

The subject sits between "do" and "have" in questions.



Have you got your keys?

The subject sits between "have" and "got" in questions.

80.8 ANSWERING "HAVE" QUESTIONS

Short answers to "have" questions can be given using "do" and "don't."



Do you have a microwave?

"Do" is added to form a question.

"Do" goes in the positive answer.

Yes, I do.

No, I don't.

"Do not" or "don't" go in the negative answer.

Questions and answers using "have got" are formed differently. "Have got" is mostly heard in UK English.



Have you got a microwave?

"Have" or "has" moves to the start of the question.

"Got" does not move.

"Have" goes in the positive answer.

Yes, I have.

No, I haven't.

"Have not" or "haven't" go in the negative answer.